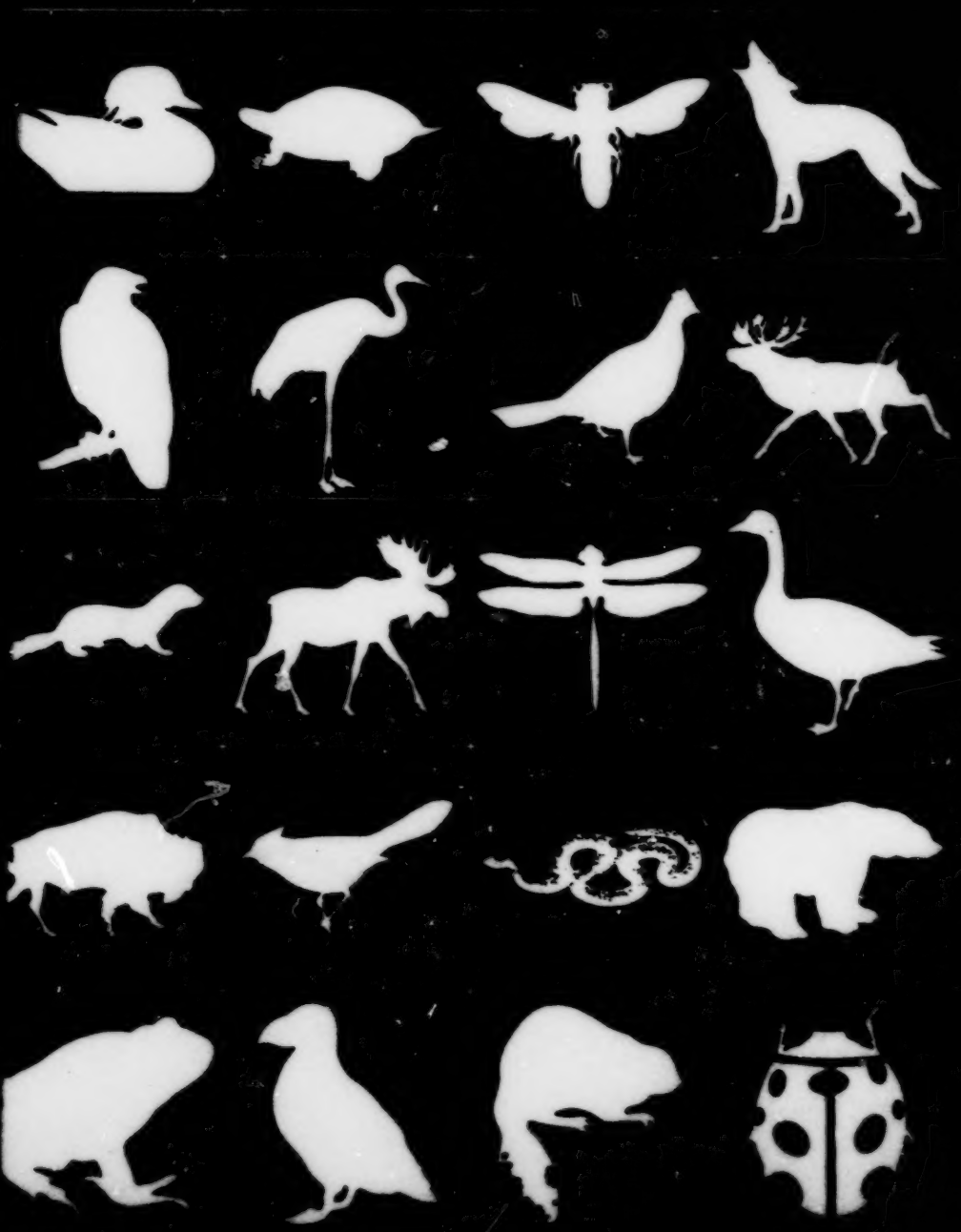
Guidelines for Wildlife Policy in Canada



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Preface

Wildlife is a great Canadian heritage, yet too little has been done to ensure that it always will be. One reason for that may be the lack of guidelines for the development of wildlife policy in Canada. This paper had its genesis at the 44th Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference in 1980, where the issues to be addressed were defined. The text has been developed through the cooperative participation of conservation organizations with the territorial, provincial and federal governments, and it is being published on behalf of the wildlife ministers of those governments.

These guidelines form a framework within which government and non-government organizations can develop their own policies and programs, and a statement of the general direction in which wildlife conservation should move in the next decade. By approving these guidelines, governments have agreed to the goals, principles and elements. In addition, they have agreed to consider implementing, where appropriate and consistent with provincial, territorial or federal policies, the actions listed under each element. An evaluation of the guidelines will be made by the Federal-Provincial Wildlife Conference after five years.

While most of the proposals in this paper will need government action, they are widely supported by individuals and organizations and will require their active participation to take effect. Wildlife conservation in Canada is and should remain a close partnership between citizens and their governments.

Introduction

Most Canadians feel that wildlife is important to them, at the very least as a symbol of a desirable quality of life or, more specifically, for the recreational opportunities, economic benefits and pleasure that wildlife provides. The use of wildlife by Canadians is no small matter. Economic activity related to wildlife, as the term has been traditionally used, has been valued at over $7 billion[1] for 1977. That figure takes account of expenditures associated with hunting, fishing and nature observation, the costs of management and research to government and non-governmental organizations, licence fees, and the value of related investments, sales, wages and wildlife-derived food products. Economics apart, the enjoyment of wildlife is widespread and greatly valued. Therefore, Canadians wish to ensure that wildlife will always exist in something like its present diversity and distribution.

Wise management of Canada's wildlife and wildlife habitat is essential if this is to be so, if the resource is to survive and the nation to prosper economically and spiritually.

The management of wildlife, which is aimed at sustaining wildlife for its own sake and for human benefit, is a complex matter. It needs to be based on a thorough knowledge of the species concerned, their habitats and their ecological relationships. The choice of management actions employed also depends upon the goals to be achieved; management actions can include total protection of wildlife species and their habitat in the natural state, as well as manipulation of habitat and regulation of wildlife use and the mitigation of damage caused by wildlife. Because there are a number of different and sometimes competing ways in which wildlife is enjoyed and used, the art of management is to provide for the most broadly acceptable mix of activities, taking account of the variety of Canadian cultural and traditional values and of the paramount need to conserve the resource for the future.

Although management is dependent upon scientific information, it also requires a strategic framework. Its goals, guiding principles and major elements must reflect a political determination of what is to be achieved, by what means and at what cost. Such a framework, broadly accepted by all responsible agencies and organizations, can help to make management consistent and effective.

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[1] *From: Estimated annual economic benefit derived from wildlife. Unpublished paper of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. 1981.*

This document provides direction for the development of wildlife policies and programs in the future. It expresses the will of Canadians to manage wildlife for the use and enjoyment of present and succeeding generations. It provides broad guidelines for activities aimed at achieving that goal, to be used by the Government of Canada and the governments of the provinces and territories as well as by non-government organizations and private enterprises.

The Concept

No form of life exists in isolation. All require nutrients, water, air, shelter and space, and have specific tolerances related to factors such as temperature, humidity, sunlight and the presence of toxic substances. The distribution, abundance and welfare of each species is determined by the extent to which these requirements are met, and by the abundance and distribution of other species with which they are ecologically linked.

The basic needs of wildlife are similar to those of man. Wildlife species thrive in a clean and productive environment; a polluted or degraded environment places their survival at risk. The same is true for man. Indeed, the status of wildlife populations can be a useful indicator of the quality of the human environment. There is a unity and an interdependence among man, living resources and the environmental elements of soil, water and air. The development and management of any one resource will contribute to the well-being of man in the long term only if it is planned and undertaken while recognizing the goals and requirements for development and management of each of the other resources. In short, land and living resources, including wildlife, require conservation if their contributions to human welfare are to continue. Their effective development and management require a coordinated, ecological approach.

Wildlife policy must also be related to changing social and economic conditions. The demand for wildlife is rising rapidly while habitat is shrinking or being altered because of man-induced change. The loss or change of habitats, particularly in southern Canada, has reduced the abundance, diversity and distribution of many wildlife species. But changes in habitat resulting from agriculture and the industrial use of Crown lands, for example, for forestry and fossil fuel production, can often benefit some species of wildlife when techniques of habitat improvement and innovative strategies for development are adopted. Indeed, development, when carefully planned, can often contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of wildlife populations.

Conflicts of interest over the use and value of wildlife among hunters, trappers, people dependant on wildlife for their livelihood, bird watchers, photographers, hikers, farmers, foresters, developers and others have not been resolved. There are local and regional shortages of wildlife and the cost of maintaining wildlife and its habitat is going up as demands for land and resource-based products rise. It is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the variety and extent of demands for wildlife. On the other hand, manage-

ment actions may be needed to deal with wildlife that becomes a nuisance. Implementing wildlife policies will help resolve conflicts and facilitate planning in all jurisdictions.

The Guidelines for Wildlife Policy in Canada draw upon the World Conservation Strategy of 1980[1], which has had broad support from leaders of governments around the world. The guidelines emphasize an ecological approach; they call for coordinating the management of wildlife with the management of other resources; they take account of social and economic factors, and propose goals to which all responsible bodies should subscribe. There are three broad goals: (1) to safeguard the ecosystems upon which all life depends, (2) to preserve the diversity of species, which enables ecosystems to function and which Canadians use and enjoy, and (3) to ensure that the enjoyment and use of wildlife is sustainable.

An important element of the guidelines is the extension of the concept of wildlife to include habitat, thus reflecting the interdependence of all living things, and the extension of policies and laws to allow the recognition or protection of any wild animals that need it, reflecting the growing interest of Canadians in species other than those which are hunted, fished or commercially exploited. The proposals for the management of wildlife do not conflict significantly with policies governing the use of commercially exploited species, but the management of many important species of wild animals and plants, notably the fish that are caught for commerce and the trees that are the basis of the forest industry, falls under the mandate of agencies other than those responsible for wildlife. It is not proposed that those arrangements be changed; it is proposed that arrangements be made so that conservation measures may be taken for the many animal species and their habitats for which responsibility has not been clearly assigned, and so that the management of wildlife may be integrated with the management of its habitat.

The guidelines recognize that effective management of wildlife is inseparable from management of land and other resources and therefore call for consultative mechanisms to enable integrated management of all resources. They stress the importance of promoting conservation practices by private individuals and corpora-

[1] *World Conservation Strategy, prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources with the support of the United Nations Environment Program and the World Wildlife Fund.*

tions. Better planning and coordination of research is proposed to improve the basis of wildlife management at the least possible cost.

The guidelines reinforce the continuing importance of the traditional pillars of wildlife management, maintaining habitat and regulating the use of wildlife; they also emphasize the value of establishing regional targets for the abundance, diversity and distribution of wildlife species. Because ecosystems may be disrupted by the introduction of exotic species of plants and animals, it is proposed that such introductions be carefully controlled.

Two important principles incorporated in the guidelines are related to the use of wildlife. The first is that all Canadians are free to use and enjoy wildlife, subject to laws; the second is that maintenance of wildlife populations must take precedence over their use.

Finally, the guidelines promote international action to conserve those species Canada shares with other countries and the world's heritage of wildlife.

To implement wildlife policies in Canada will require the collaboration of all levels of government and concerned individuals, private corporations and organizations. Cooperative relationships among governments should be strengthened and supplemented by new arrangements between governments and others, designed to take advantage of the skills, resources and opportunities available to corporations and individuals. Governments should take the lead in implementing policies by working out well-planned and coordinated programs to maintain wildlife populations and rationalize their use. This would help to secure rural economies and enhance the quality of life for all Canadians. The cost of such programs, which would yield broadly enjoyed benefits, will need broadly based support.

If the programs developed from wildlife policies are to succeed, they will need a continuous input of innovative thinking, well-planned research and hard work. Nor can the programs achieve their goals without strong public support. Canadians must also do their part as individuals by respecting wildlife laws and regulations and by using wildlife without abuse or waste or damage to the environment. To engender public respect for the land and the wildlife it supports is perhaps the most important task of all.

Goals

Because of the interdependence among living resources and the elements of the environment, the goals of wildlife policy must be comprehensive and fundamental:

To maintain the ecosystems upon which wildlife and people depend.
All life depends upon ecological processes such as the cycling of nutrients in soil, water, plants and animals, the natural transport and regeneration of soils, and the fertilization and cleansing of waters. If ecological processes are impeded by careless human intervention, wildlife and human life will be correspondingly limited. These essential processes take place within ecosystems such as the boreal forests, short-grass prairies and coastal estuaries, which may be termed "life-support systems" or considered as wildlife habitats. Wildlife is an integral component of the ecosystem within which Canadians sustain and enhance their lives.

To preserve the genetic diversity of wildlife.
The many species of wildlife found in Canada add diversity to the living landscape that Canadians enjoy, provide a broad base of resources for recreational and economic activities, and, most importantly, form the vital links in ecosystems.

To ensure that the enjoyment and use of wildlife is sustainable.
Wildlife species are of vital importance to many Canadian communities, notably as a source of food and fur. The extensive tourist and recreational industry depends to a significant extent upon wildlife. Significant reduction in the numbers or distribution of some species of wildlife would cause direct and potentially permanent losses to lifestyles and to the economy. The maintenance of wildlife stocks must, therefore, take precedence over any particular human use from time to time.

Guiding Principles

The adoption of guidelines for wildlife policy in Canada is a new step, but the elements of wildlife policy and relevant aspects of resources policy have long been the subject of serious consideration. Principles which have emerged from that process and certain basic principles of Canadian society need to be re-stated so that, together with the goals stated above, they may form the essential framework of wildlife policy.

Such principles are:

1. Wildlife is an integral component of the environment within which Canadians sustain and enhance their lives.

2. The way in which land is managed determines the quality and quantity of habitat upon which wildlife depends.

3. The maintenance of viable natural wildlife stocks always takes precedence over their use.

4. Canadians are the temporary custodians, not the owners, of their wildlife heritage.

5. Canadians are free to enjoy and use wildlife in Canada, subject to laws aimed at securing its sustainable enjoyment and use.

6. The cost of management essential to preserving viable populations of wildlife should be borne by all Canadians; special management measures required to permit intensive uses should be supported by the users.

7. Wildlife has intrinsic, social and economic values, but wildlife sometimes causes problems that require management.

8. Conservation of wildlife relies upon a well-informed public.

Elements and Actions to Consider

1. Adopt a broad concept of wildlife to include habitat.
Nowhere in Canada is responsibility sufficiently comprehensive to take into account the plants and invertebrate animals that now require management but, for lack of an appropriate mandate, are now generally ignored. In addition, variation among jurisdictions in the definitions of wildlife currently used causes problems in law enforcement. Also, the dependance of wildlife on its habitat is often not reflected in laws authorizing wildlife management. Therefore, governments should extend their policies and laws accordingly.

Actions to consider:
(a) ensure that policies and laws allow for the conservation of any wild animals and their habitats.
(b) adopt a definition of wildlife that can include any species of wild animals.
(c) provide a basis in law for the integrated management of wildlife with wildlife habitat.

2. Adopt comprehensive conservation policies.
Current resource management policies tend to be oriented towards a single purpose. Taking ecological factors into consideration, either when attempting to solve resource use problems or to facilitate comprehensive land use planning, is a complex matter. Often environmental assessments are only considered after commitments have been made to projects; this allows mitigation but does not allow initial planning for measures to enhance wildlife. All conservation agencies must address coordination in resource and land use planning within governments, among the different levels of government, and between the public and private sectors. Without such coordination, comprehensive and effective conservation of wildlife is very difficult. Therefore, governments should ensure effective wildlife management by reviewing, strengthening and adopting comprehensive conservation policies and procedures.

Actions to consider:
(a) proclaim a commitment to the sustainable use of renewable resources, including wildlife, by reflecting conservation goals in legislation.
(b) assess and refine policies which directly influence land use and wildlife habitat.
(c) establish permanent mechanisms for joint consultation which would permit a multi-agency approach both to defining objectives and to managing programs for the conservation and effective management of air, soil, water and living resources.

(d) clarify the conservation mandates and responsibilities of the many agencies whose work directly or indirectly affects conservation.
(e) include consideration of consequences of development proposals when formulating resource policy.

3. Involve the private sector.
Greater involvement in conservation on the part of non-government organizations, private corporations and individuals would add substantially to the support for conservation. It would improve the exchange of information between the public and private sectors, and facilitate coordination of publicly and privately funded activities. It would also help to resolve the difficulties that arise from the paradox of public stewardship of wildlife that depends upon habitat that is often privately owned. Therefore, governments should energetically promote cooperative wildlife efforts, the principle of stewardship of resources, and the adoption of conservation practices by private landowners and persons licensed to use public lands.

Actions to consider:
(a) promote and assist wildlife projects involving private citizens, organizations and business.
(b) motivate landowners and land users to participate in wildlife management by developing cooperative programs that increase the benefits from wildlife and alleviate problems caused by wildlife.
(c) develop effective information, education and extension programs.
(d) ensure adequate provision for the involvement of local communities, as well as other interests, in the wildlife aspects of resource management and land-use planning.
(e) require that assessments of the effects on the environment of development projects coincide with engineering and socio-economic studies at the earliest stage and throughout the development-planning process.

4. Improve the basis of wildlife management.
To meet the challenge of human population growth and the increasing demand to use and enjoy wildlife, the art and science of wildlife management must itself evolve and improve. Many of the gaps in our knowledge of wildlife populations and their behaviour and requirements must be filled, more knowledge of the characteristics and aspirations of the users of wildlife must be obtained, and

the social and economic values of wildlife must be more clearly and comprehensively defined.

Actions to consider:

(a) conduct base-line surveys and monitor the status of key species of wildlife.

(b) coordinate the plannning and increase the scale of research while directing research to species in which public interest is growing.

(c) give priority to research that will provide the information needed to plan development with minimum detriment to wildlife and wildlife habitat.

(d) determine on a regular basis the cultural and economic values of, and the demand for, wildlife in order better to plan, allocate and manage the use of land, water and other resources.

5. Ensure maintenance of wildlife habitat.

Maintenance of habitat is the key to the continued abundance of wildlife, yet increases in human populations in Canada lead both to a decline in the extent and quality of wildlife habitat and to an increase in the demand for wildlife. Therefore, governments should plan and implement comprehensive programs to maintain the diversity and distribution of wildlife habitats within major ecosystems in Canada. Such programs should have information-gathering, planning and action phases.

Actions to consider:

(a) assess the capability of habitats to support wildlife, including the identification of existing constraints.

(b) assess the capacity of habitats to respond to changing land uses.

(c) formulate regional goals and objectives for the maintenance of wildlife habitat, particularly as inputs to land-use planning.

(d) conduct periodic surveys of the extent and quality of habitat to determine gains and losses.

(e) adopt measures to ensure that the use of ecosystems does not reduce their potential productive capacity so as to retain a maximum latitude for choice in making future decisions on land use and development.

(f) control the discharge of pollutants to minimize damage to habitat.

(g) establish systems of protected areas that include representative ecological types, giving priority to the protection of unusual habitats of limited extent, such as estuaries and old-age timber stands.

(h) conclude agreements between government agencies and with private corporations aimed at improving and extending wildlife habitat by integrating wildlife management with —

i) agriculture
— plan multiple-use strategies for certain ecosystems (e.g., grazing lands, wetlands)
— experiment with game ranching[1] as an alternative to the use of land by domestic species.

ii) forestry
— harmonize forestry and wildlife objectives for forest lands and plan cutting and reforestation programs accordingly.

iii) energy and mining
— plan multiple-use strategies for lands altered by mining, seismic survey lines, roads, hydro-reservoirs, and other activities.

iv) urban and recreation development
— plan to maximize wildlife benefits and to minimize both risks to human safety and damage to property caused by wildlife.

6. Protect the genetic structure of Canadian ecosystems.
Ecosystems reflect the adjustments of species to their environments over long periods of time. Many Canadian ecosystems have been severely damaged by the introduction of exotic species of plants and animals. In only a very few instances have the long-term benefits outweighed the costs. Therefore, governments should ensure that ecosystems within their jurisdictions will evolve in a natural manner and should cooperate with other governments as appropriate.

Actions to consider:

(a) cooperate to limit the deliberate or inadvertent introduction to Canada of exotic species of plants and animals.

(b) ensure that the transplanting of plants or animals to new areas within Canada does not adversely affect local wildlife or its habitat.

(c) require the consent of the receiving jurisdiction to the export of wild plants or animals.

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[1] Game ranching is the production of wildlife for consumptive use by maximizing the carrying capacity of the range and the productivity of the species.

7. Maintain optimum wildlife populations.
To meet the demand for use of wildlife requires not only the maintenance of sufficient habitat, but also the regulation of the enjoyment and use of wildlife and, in special cases, the employment of techniques for propagation and re-introduction. Governments should manage wildlife so as to maintain diversity of species broadly distributed throughout their traditional range and at levels of abundance to meet management objectives.

Actions to consider:
(a) establish regional targets for abundance, diversity and distribution.
(b) maintain and, as appropriate, extend suitable habitat through incorporating regional targets in regional land-use planning (see Policy Element 5c).
(c) regulate the harvest of wildlife to ensure sustainable yields at levels compatible with established regional targets.
(d) ensure adequate long-term programs, involving the public and private sectors, to reduce adverse effects of certain wildlife populations.
(e) identify special requirements and take special measures for the conservation of rare, threatened and endangered species and habitats.

8. Increase the benefits from wildlife while ensuring its wise and responsible use.
Wildlife's social and economic benefits are both inadequately recognized and insufficiently developed. Promoting economic and other benefits will increase the public support for conservation.

The taking of wildlife, or activities that disturb wildlife, must be carefully regulated. The legal commitments to native people must be honoured while maintaining viable wildlife populations for the benefit of all Canadians. Further considerations include the subsistence needs of other Canadians and the provision of economic support for rural people. The reasons for regulating and allocating the use of wildlife should be broadly disseminated in order to secure public support. Governments should provide opportunities for use so that the benefits of wildlife may be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Actions to consider:
(a) develop ways to use the economic benefits from wildlife to sustain the wildlife resource.

(b) ensure that the benefits of wildlife are enjoyed by as many people as possible, consistent with the maintenance of wildlife populations.

(c) promote responsible and ethical use of wildlife by all users, and enforce and promote the acceptance of conservation laws.

(d) promote activities that develop the recreational and economic benefits associated with wildlife.

(e) promote activities that reflect the amenity value of wildlife.

(f) examine new initiatives in the sale, capture and propagation of wildlife, where the status of stocks permits.

(g) encourage reasonable access by the public to wildlife on private lands and permit such access on Crown lands while protecting the interests of landowners and users of Crown lands, by amending legislation relating to trespass and landowner liability as necessary.

(h) provide access to wildlife as close as possible to centres of human population, by cooperating with municipalities, non-government organizations and landowners.

(i) carry out joint programs between governments and non-government organizations to inform the public of the rationale for conservation laws and regulations.

9. Participate in international conservation.

Canadians have two reasons for participating in international conservation. First, to ensure the continuing availability of resources which are or could be shared with other countries; and, second, to contribute to the maintenance of mankind's global heritage, by promoting and supporting good land use, care of the environment and the wise use of living resources in other parts of the world.

Therefore, the Government of Canada, which has responsibility for international wildlife matters, should participate in international conservation, cooperating with provinces and territories as appropriate.

Actions to consider:

(a) take part in international programs, mainly bilateral, aimed at assessing stocks, preserving habitat and regulating harvest to ensure sustainable yield of those species that Canada shares with other countries.

(b) negotiate reasonable opportunities for Canadians to use stocks of wildlife shared with other countries.

(c) support the establishment and enforcement of international conventions aimed at conserving wildlife, particularly migratory species and species which exist in areas beyond national jurisdictions.

(d) initiate and support technical assistance programs in developing countries which are aimed at the conservation of wildlife and living resources and at the integration of conservation principles in development planning and projects.